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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

Analysis of the organizational structure and the personnel and technical resources of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the United Nations Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/34, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly, at the main part of its fifty-fourth session, containing an analysis of the organizational structure and the technical, personnel and financial resources of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section of the United Nations Secretariat, commensurate with the increased workload and the level of responsibility necessary to implement the Secretariat's mandate as contained in Council resolution 1996/31, parts X and XI.

2. In 1998, a report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section (E/1998/43 and Corr.1) was issued. The scope of the activities undertaken by the Section is greater than anticipated in that report. At that time, the Section recorded 1,356 NGOs in consultative status as of 1997. Between 1998 and 1999, 582 organizations were granted status by the Council, bringing the total number of NGOs in consultative status with the Council to 1,938. The increase in the number of NGOs in status has led to an increase in the volume of work that is reflected in every aspect of the Section's activities. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations has also had to adjust the time allocated for its deliberations accordingly. While the number of meetings at its regular sessions has remained constant, the Committee has had to extend the length of its resumed sessions to accommodate its increased workload. By 1999, the number of meetings originally forecast in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (see A/54/6, section 9) has in fact already doubled. The subsequent increase in the number of informal consultations, although not noted among the activities for the biennium, nevertheless accounts for a significant increase in the work of the Section.

3. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), in its report on its thirty-ninth session expressed the view that given the significantly increased workload and the level of responsibility of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section, it should have all the required resources to carry out efficiently its mandate, in particular to provide substantive support to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (see A/54/16, paras. 180 and 182). In its conclusions and recommendations, CPC noted the increasing workload and responsibilities which made it difficult for the Section to carry out its activities efficiently, effectively and expeditiously, and welcomed the proposal to strengthen the Section by allocating adequate resources in the proposed programme budget.

4. The programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 indicates that the subprogramme will aim to strengthen substantive support to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, including in its function of recommending consultative status in response to greatly increased requests from non-governmental organizations and the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council.

5. The present report analyses the Section activities which are required to handle the workload of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and to meet the growing needs of a rapidly expanding non-governmental community seeking participation in the work of the United Nations, as follows:

(a) Section II details the work performed by the Section on a regular basis. Key tasks are described, with an estimate of the staff time in work/months that will be required for each task during the biennium 2000/2001. It also describes special projects undertaken in 1999 and those proposed for the 2000/2001 biennium to increase the Section's effectiveness and efficiency in providing support to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, the Council and the broader United Nations system as related to NGO matters;

(b) Section III describes the outreach and liaison activities of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section;

(c) Section IV provides details of the organization and structure of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section.

II. Mandate and work programme of the Secretariat

A. Mandate

6. The principal mandate of the Secretariat, as provided for in part XI of resolution 1996/31, states that adequate Secretariat support shall be required for fulfilment of the mandate defined for the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations with respect to carrying out the wider range of activities in which the enhanced involvement of non-governmental organizations is envisaged. The Secretary-General is requested to provide the necessary resources for that purpose. In the same resolution, the Secretary-General was also requested to enhance and streamline Secretariat support arrangements, to improve practical arrangements for greater use of modern information and communication technologies and to facilitate the broad-based participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations meetings. The Secretariat is also required to carry out the duties assigned to it concerning consultative arrangements and the accreditation of non-governmental organizations to international conferences sponsored by the United Nations (see Council resolution 1996/31, paras. 64-69). Hence, the Secretariat has a broad mandate to facilitate and enhance the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the organization.

B. Support to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

7. The Non-Governmental Organizations Section has three principal responsibilities in providing support to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations: (a) processing new applications/reclassifications for consultative status, including ongoing and continuing consultations with members of the Committee on these applications and requests for reclassification; (b) monitoring and reporting, as required, on the activities and programmes of NGOs in general and special status, and processing their quadrennial reports on their activities; and (c) providing meeting services, staffing and documentation during regular and special sessions of the Committee.

8. The past decade has seen very substantial growth in the number of non-governmental organizations seeking and receiving consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. The increase in new applications and quadrennial reports, as set out in tables 1 and 2, is indicative of these trends.

Table 1.
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council, and new applications and quadrennial reports processed annually, relative to the number of staff in the Section

	1992/93	*1998/99*	*2000/01[a]*
Number of NGOs in status	943	1 938	2 500
Number of applications received	200	400	777
Number of applications submitted to the Committee[b]	52	250	500
Number of Professional staff	3	5[c]	5[d]
Number of General Service staff	3	4	4[d]

[a] Projected.

[b] The discrepancy between the number of applications received and those actually submitted to the Committee on NGOs is explained by the fact that 20 per cent of applicants do not follow up on their letters of intent, while an additional 15 per cent do not complete their applications at the appropriate time in the year that they are scheduled to be submitted to the Committee.

[c] In addition, one P-4 staff member was temporarily redeployed for 1999 only from elsewhere in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; due to the situation of the post, the staff member was offered an agreed termination effective early 2000.

[d] As provided for in the proposed programme budget for 2000-2001.

9. Throughout the decade, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has sought the necessary resources to try to keep pace with the ever-expanding workload. In 1992, it was brought to the Committee's attention that the Non-Governmental Organizations Section was handling 943 applications with two Professional and two General Service staff, the same number assigned to it in 1943, when the NGOs in consultative status numbered 41. In 1992, the Section was augmented by one staff member in each category. Subsequently, in response to Council resolution 1997/58, the resources of the Section were further strengthened by two additional Professional and one additional General Service staff. The most recent increase in NGO participation is no doubt due to the five major international conferences held during the 1990s, which caused NGO interest to accelerate geometrically.

Table 2.
Number of quadrennial reports processed by the Non-Governmental Organizations Section, 1989-2007

	1989	*1991*	*1993*	*1995*	*1997*	*1999*	*2001[a]*	*2003[a]*	*2005[a]*	*2007[a]*
Quads	106	187	422	226	181	292	376	535	641	813

[a] Projected.

10. The amount of work and time entailed in the review of quadrennial reports has also increased. From 1989 to the present, the volume of non-governmental organizations in special and general consultative status has increased almost threefold, and is expected to increase further by a factor of 2.7 from 1999 to 2007. Table 2 illustrates the dynamics of the increased workload of the Section. In addition, it should be noted that approximately 100 deferred new applications and quadrennial reports were not taken into account.

C. Support to Committee sessions

Table 3.
Activities of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section in 1999, by tasks and work months

Activity	*Professional work months*	*General Service*
Processing of new applications	29.7	19.0
Support to NGO Committee sessions	9.0	5.1
Communication with Member States	1.8	0.3
Support to Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations	1.6	0.1
NGO annual accreditation and support to international conferences and preparatory committee meetings	5.9	17.8
Follow-up of deferred applications	2.1	0.3
Processing of quadrennial reports	11.3	12.8
Maintaining the list of NGOs in consultative status[a]	0.3	0.7
Follow-up on NGO Committee queries on applications[a]	1.4	0.3
Production of a brochure on the outreach programme[a]	0.9	0.05
Review of the NGOs accredited by action of the Secretary-General	0.1	0.08
Compilation of letters and guidelines	0.4	0.14
Maintaining the calendar of events	0.9	0.14
Maintaining the filing system	0.5	4.3
Maintaining the Section's Web site on the Internet	7.3	5.5
Ongoing correspondence	8.9	2.9
Work with Documents Control	0.8	0.14
Support to the Committee on NGOs (Total)	**87.3**	**70.3**

Note: The purpose of this table is to show the relative numbers of work months devoted to different functions of the Section; it includes 37.6 work months contributed by interns, volunteers and temporary staff.

[a] New activities.

11. Table 3 shows the work months required to fulfil the major mandated functions of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section, particularly with regard to the tasks associated with the number of new applications/reclassifications, NGOs actually in status and the increase in quadrennial reports due for consideration. This aspect of the work of the Section has, moreover, become increasingly complex with the growing number of relatively small national NGOs, whose documentary submissions are subject to impediments both of language and logistics. During 1999, the Section put into effect numerous changes to try to respond to this heavier workload and to improve the efficiency of the Section's support of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. In addition to the new activities detailed in table 3, the following tasks were also undertaken in 1999:

(a) Compilation of two lists distinguishing between applications on which members of the Committee had no comments and applications on which delegations expressed reservations or requested additional information;

(b) Preparation and distribution of binders containing all official documentation in the six official United Nations languages to Committee members at the beginning of the session;

(c) Generation of a daily report during Committee sessions reflecting its decisions, for circulation to Committee members;

(d) Queries from the Committee are now faxed by the Section to the NGO concerned on the same day of the consideration of its application in order to elicit a timely response to enable the Committee to complete its deliberations on the application during the same session.

12. While the above changes have significantly improved the efficiency of the Committee's deliberations, they have also added to the workload of the Section.

13. In addition to the support and servicing of meetings of the Committee, there are many ongoing activities undertaken by the Section in support of the work of the Committee and as a service to United Nations Member States, the United Nations system, the NGO community and the general public. As indicated in table 3, a significant number of Professional work months are devoted to ongoing correspondence, much of it comprising the prolonged interaction with NGOs necessary to complete a technically correct application/reclassification and/or quadrennial report for submission to the Committee.

D. Accreditation of non-governmental organizations

14. Of particular note are the work months required for the accreditation procedures to the various United Nations special events that take place during the year. The Section provides the service of one full-time Professional and one General Service staff member for the year-round accreditation process for the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and the Council and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the preregistration and registration processes of the various preparatory committees for special sessions of the General Assembly and international conferences. All requests for accreditation are channelled through the NGO Section, where eligibility is checked against the database, which contains detailed information on NGOs. The NGO Section is thus responsible not only for the verification of the eligibility of potential participants in accordance with criteria established by the meeting secretariats but also for establishing the preregistration lists and database to be used for the registration process. In the case of some meetings, the Section is also called upon to handle the actual registration of participant NGOs.

15. Both the workload and the level of responsibility of the Section have increased significantly with the growing number of NGOs in status. Such tasks as monitoring the activities of NGOs in status, database maintenance, maintaining a current list of the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (for the most recent list, see E/1998/INF/6), general correspondence and document distribution have become more complex owing to the large number of NGOs involved and the vastly increased number of their representatives. In order to meet the challenges posed by the increase in workload and responsibility, the Section has launched several special projects in 1999, and has proposed a few more important and necessary projects for the biennium 2000-2001, which are described below.

E. New and ongoing initiatives for the biennium 2000/2001

Table 4.
Projects launched in 1999 and for the biennium 2000/2001

Activity	*Professional work months*	*General Service*
Monitoring NGOs on the Roster	1.9	2.1
Monitoring of NGOs in general and special consultation status by year of accreditation	2.5	0.8
Grouping of NGOs by objectives, interests and activities	2.8	0.8
Maintaining a record of Council decisions on withdrawal and suspension	0.2	0.08
Outreach to the NGO community	2.3	0.3
Guidelines to assist NGOs in paperwork	4.4	0.6
Building a comprehensive database	5.4	8.2
Coordination with the larger United Nations system on consultative status	1.0	0.1
Establishment of NGO regional networks	0.6	0.05
Procedures and new responsibilities increasing the workload of the Section	1.7	0.3
Workshop in partnership with UNDP	6.0	1.0
Total (work months per year)	**29.3**	**14.3**

16. The scope of the activities outlined in table 4 has increased dramatically over the past six months. The associated work months are related to the 1999 start-up phase for each activity, and will increase during the 2000-2001 biennium while each activity is integrated into the regular work programme of the Section. These initiatives were mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General concerning arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United Nations system (A/54/329), with the expectation that the NGO Section will in fact be able to deliver them.

Monitoring

17. Since the preparation of the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Section (E/1998/43), the NGO Section's monitoring function has assumed added importance and requires more attention. In view of the increasing number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council, the NGO Section has found it necessary to enhance its capabilities to monitor the performance, activities and conduct of NGOs to meet the needs of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and other concerned parties.

Monitoring non-governmental organizations on the Roster

18. As of October 1999, there were 909 NGOs on the Roster. Since NGOs on the Roster are not required to submit quadrennial reports, to date there has been no mechanism to track whether they are still in existence or are fulfilling the conditions outlined in Council resolution 1996/31. The number of NGOs admitted to the Roster continues to grow. After the most current review of NGOs in relationship with the specialized agencies, an additional 222 NGOs were added to the Council Roster. Under the circumstances, it has become increasingly important to monitor their continued involvement in the work of the Council

and its subsidiary bodies. The Section is meeting this challenge by frequently reviewing the NGOs on the Roster and analysing their current activities. Eventually, NGOs that continue to be active in contributing to the work of the Council or other United Nations bodies or agencies will be encouraged to seek special consultative status, while those that have been inactive will be referred to the Committee for review.

Monitoring non-governmental organizations in general and special consultative status

19. Until recently, there was no mechanism to generate a schedule of the quadrennial reports due each year. In recent months, the Section has developed the capability to perform this function by establishing a database to compile information based on the year in which an NGO obtained its current status or most recent reclassification. By means of this monitoring system, the Section can now generate the schedule of quadrennial reporting for each NGO. Because of the large number of quadrennial reports, little or no attention has been given to the qualitative dimension of quadrennial evaluation. A recent review taken up by the NGO Section reveals that some NGOs have done very serious work in collaboration with United Nations agencies and others have contributed substantively to the work of the United Nations, while the involvement of others has been marginal at best. With additional support in the coming biennium, the Section should be able to handle the following tasks in a systematic manner: (a) give ample notification to NGOs due to submit quadrennial reports; (b) monitor tardiness in reporting; (c) bring such cases to the attention of the Committee; and (d) ensure analytical and qualitative review of the quadrennial reports. This process is much more than a pro forma control mechanism for NGOs. It is anticipated that the United Nations itself will benefit from having recognizably competent and relevant NGOs providing input to its work.

Establishment of a comprehensive database

20. With the continuing increase in the number of new applicants and NGOs in status, there is an urgent need for a current, accurate and comprehensive database to keep track of these organizations. While the construction of this database is already in progress, the main tasks for the biennium 2000-2001 will be to (a) correct the deficiencies and inconsistencies in the various existing databases; (b) enable the generation of useful and suitably formatted reports; and (c) make the database user friendly in terms of information entry and retrieval. It is envisioned that an external consultant specializing in the design of customized information management systems will be needed to execute this project.

21. The research undertaken as part of the three projects described above will contribute to the construction of the core database. Information from NGOs on the Roster and status-granting United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, together with the quadrennial reports from NGOs in general and special consultative status with the Council, will also feed into the core database. In turn, as the database reaches its target level of comprehensiveness, accuracy and versatility, it will facilitate further analysis of NGOs in status, as, for example, in the project described below.

Analysis of non-governmental organizations by objectives, interests, activities and geographic location

22. The increase in applications and accreditation of NGOs in recent years has led to concerns that the resources of both the NGO Section and the Committee will be exhausted by the growing workload, while the process of NGO consultation with the Council will itself become increasingly unwieldy. To mitigate these concerns, the Section is exploring the

possibility of using its data on their objectives, interests, activities and geographic location to assist NGOs in the creation of groups of similar orientation to form a single joint committee or coalition for the purposes of consultation with the Council, as provided in paragraph 9 of Council resolution 1996/31. In addition to expediting the formation of joint committees outlined above, this project will also facilitate the identification of relevant NGOs for the purposes of contribution to the work of the Council, in keeping with the Council's goal to achieve a just, balanced, effective and genuine involvement of non-governmental organizations from all regions and areas of the world, and to pay particular attention to non-governmental organizations that have special expertise or experience upon which the Council may wish to draw (see Council resolution 1996/31, para. 5).

III. Outreach and liaison with other United Nations organizations

A. Coordination with the United Nations system on consultative status

23. With regard to activities to promote international cooperation and inter-agency coordination and liaison as forecast in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, the NGO Section has undertaken a number of initiatives. The Section has identified a need to collaborate with other United Nations bodies and the specialized agencies to examine the principles and practices relating to their consultative relationship with NGOs in order to promote harmonization of practice within the system, to the extent possible. Preliminary contact has been made with a number of United Nations system organizations, and it is anticipated that modalities will be developed to promote better coordination among the different organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system concerning the granting of consultative status to NGOs.

B. Non-governmental organizations workshops in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme

24. A project proposal has been submitted to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the objective of exploring ways in which the Section and the country offices of UNDP can work together to facilitate the participation of national and subregional NGOs, particularly those from developing countries, in the work of the United Nations in general and the Economic and Social Council in particular. The proposed project will seek to make information on the relationship arrangements between NGOs and the United Nations system more widely available, particularly to NGOs in developing countries who do not have the advantage of being in close proximity to the headquarters of various United Nations organizations.

C. Establishment of non-governmental organizations regional networks

25. The Section will work to improve the exchange of information through informal networks of country or regionally based NGOs in consultative status with the Council, which will serve as links between the NGO Section and NGOs in each region.

26. Table 4 reflects an increased NGO Section effort to interact more effectively with the NGO community. In the past year, the Section has established a Web site which carries regularly updated information of interest to NGOs and is in the process of creating a user-

friendly database on NGOs. Furthermore, bearing in mind both the emphasis placed in Council resolution 1996/31 on encouraging geographical diversity among NGOs and the large number of organizations with limited access to technology, the Section has devoted considerable effort to the production of informative written material and training workshops. The workshops are designed to particularly benefit those NGOs that are outside the main headquarters circuits, and are intended to maximize the benefits of consultative arrangements to both the United Nations and the organizations that contribute to its activities in the economic and social fields.

IV. Organization and structure for human and technical resources

Table 5.
Human resource requirements of the Section in terms of work months, per annum

	Actual staff resources	
Activity	*Professional*	*General Service*
Support to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations	43	27
Accreditation of NGOs to preparatory committee sessions for United Nations international conferences and to actual conferences	8	13
Special projects	21	8
Total	**72**	**48**

27. The present human resources of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section are as follows: one P-5, three P-4, one P-3, one P-2 and four General Service staff (see table 5). It is important to note that the rapid development of the partnership between the United Nations and the NGO community has made it necessary for the Section to make significant changes in its work programme and assume additional functions and responsibilities. As described in this present report, they are composed of a substantial outreach initiative as well as a number of new substantive coordination activities on behalf of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, the Economic and Social Council and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as well as other United Nations entities.

28. In addition to human resources, technical resources are also used by the Section. The present computer equipment is described in table 6.

Table 6.
1999 Computer capacity of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section

Item	*Quantity*
Hardware	
Pentium(r) with 14-inch Monitor, 16 RAM, 0.8 GB	6
Pentium(r) with 14-inch Monitor, 32 RAM, 3.2 GB, 24x CD-ROM	5
17-inch Monitor	1
Printer HP LaserJet 5 SI NX	1
Printer HP LaserJet 4500 DN	1
Printer HP LaserJet III	7
Printer HP LaserJet 6L	1
Printer HP LaserJet 6P	1
Printer HP 2100	2
Software	
WordPerfect 6.0	
Microsoft Office 97	

V. Conclusion

29. The crowded agenda for the year 2000, with the preparation of the various millennium-related events, will substantially increase the workload of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section and further challenge the Section to find new ways to meet its goals.

Figure I
Volume of non-governmental organizations granted consultative status by the Economic and Social Council, by status and year

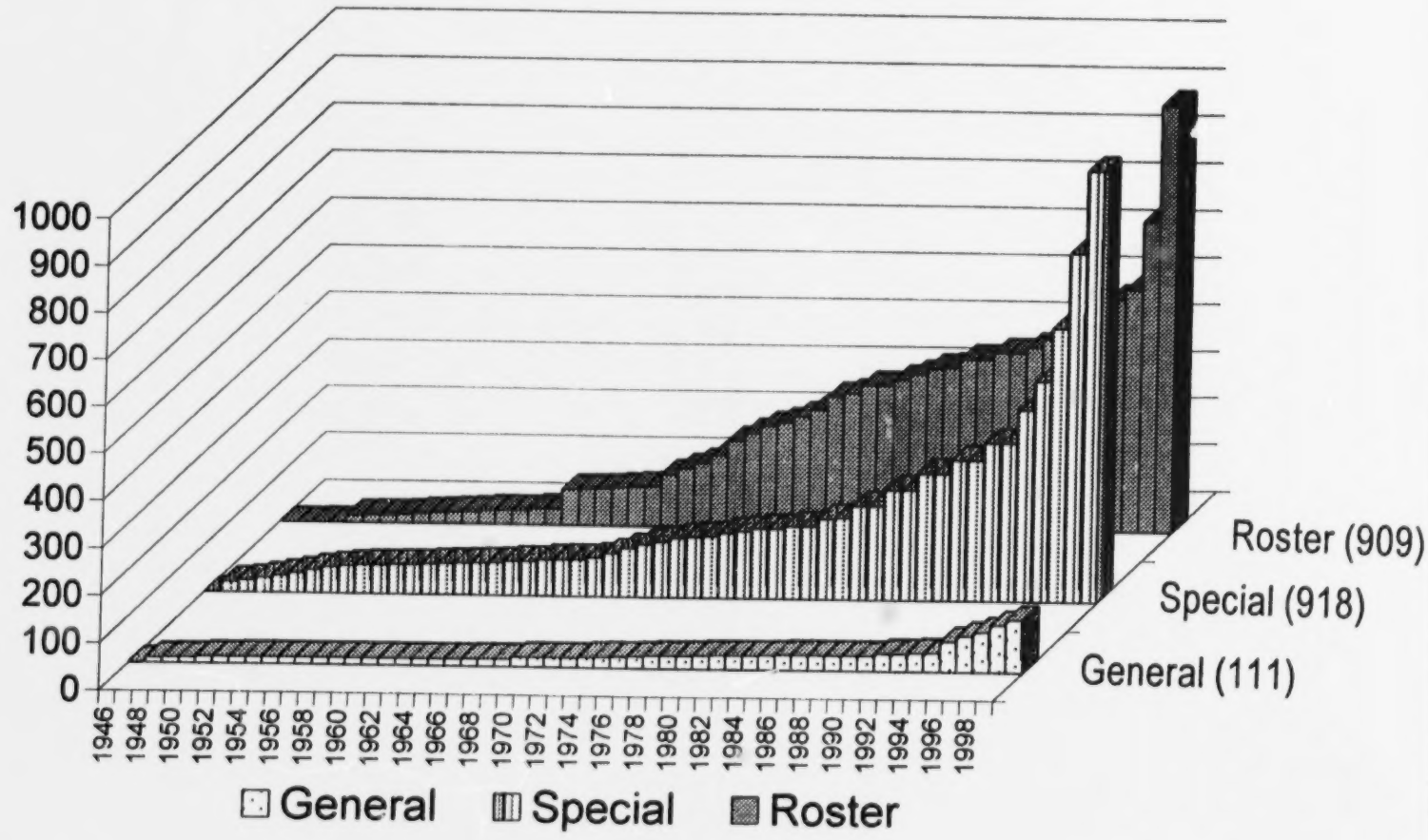
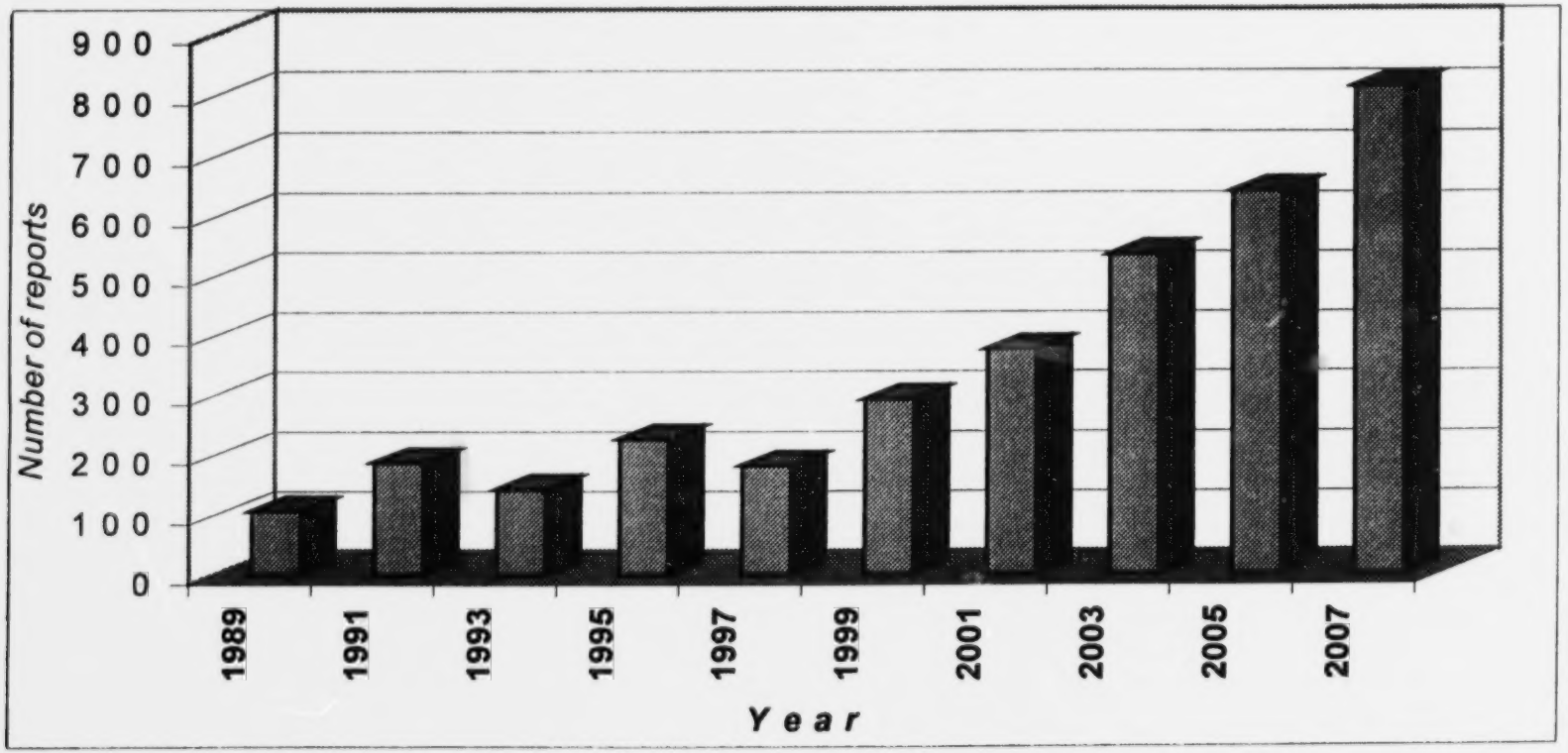


Figure II

Volume of quadrennial reports on the activities of non-governmental organizations in general or special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council that have already been processed or are expected to be processed by the staff of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section, 1989-2007



Note: Expected numbers were calculated using regression analysis approximations, and because the relationship that was found was extremely statistically significant the forecast can be considered reliable; however, estimates presented are quite conservative since the late 1990s have shown considerable positive deviations from long-term trends.